[For the functional aspects of chest-pounding as a means of resolving conflict situations involving a high degree of emotions, see category 578.]

11: Chagnon E-5 (1964-1968) 1968 SQ18 Yanoama SQ18

5

Yąnomamö Warfare

Levels of Violence

*628 THE FEAST AND ALLIANCE can and often do fail to establish stable, amicable relationships between sovereign villages. When this happens, the groups may coexist for a period of time without any overt expressions of hostility. This, however, is an unstable situation, and no two villages that are within comfortable walking distance from each other can maintain such a relationship indefinitely: They must become allies, *628 or hostility is likely to develop between them. Indifference leads to ignorance or suspi- 721 cion, and this soon gives way to accusations of sorcery. Once the relationship is of this 954 sort, a death in one of the villages will be attributed to the malevolent *hekura* sent by shamans in the other village, and raids will eventually take place between them.

726 Yąnomamö warfare proper is the raid. That is, not all of their feuding and squabbles can be considered as war, although the values associated with war—bellicosity, ferocity, and violence—undoubtedly increase the amount of all kinds of fighting.

*628 War is only one form of violence in a graded series of aggressive activities (Chag- 578 non 1967). Indeed, some of the other forms of fighting, such as the formal chest-pounding 152 duel, may even be considered as the antithesis of war, for it provides an alternative to kill- 154 ing. Duels are formal and are regulated by stringent rules about proper ways to deliver and receive blows. Much of Yąnomamö fighting is kept innocuous by these rules so that the concerned parties do not have to resort to drastic means to resolve their grievances. The three most innocuous forms of violence, chest pounding, side slapping, and club fights, permit the contestants to express their hostilities in such a way that they can continue to remain on relatively peaceful terms with each other after the contest is settled. Thus, Yąnomamö culture calls forth aggressive behavior, but at the same time provides a regulated system in which the expressions of violence can be controlled.

*628 The most innocuous form of fighting is the chest-pounding duel described in the 578 last chapter. These duels usually take place between the members of different villages and are precipitated by such minor affronts as malicious gossip, accusations of cowardice, stinginess with food, or niggardliness in trading.